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Testimony before the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Submitted by Maggie Adair, Deputy Director
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Good morning, Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. My name is Maggie Adair, Deputy Director of the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). CAHS is a 100-year-old statewide nonprofit organization that works to end poverty and to engage, equip, and empower all families in Connecticut to build a secure future.

I am here to testify on behalf of two bills before you today.

S.B. No. 916: An Act Concerning Remediation. CAHS supports efforts to study and improve Connecticut's remedial education programs in all of the state's public higher education institutions. As the Committee is aware, the state's community colleges began their process of improvement through participation in the *Achieving the Dream* project and continue those efforts with Gates Foundation funding of the *Developmental Education Initiative*. Though the number of students needing and receiving remedial course work may be smaller than at the community colleges because of differences in admission policies, a similar examination is needed at Connecticut's state universities and the University of Connecticut.

The state's academic achievement gap, one of the greatest in the country with regard to race/ethnicity and income, does not disappear once students move into postsecondary education. Students of color and those from low-income families often are the cohorts of students who have not attained the educational foundation for college studies. Students needing developmental education require a host of academic supports to work their way through college curricula to obtain a degree or certificate. Determining the best ways to provide this support needs examination.

Certainly attempts to address the problem when students are still in high school make the most sense, but there will always be postsecondary students who fall through the cracks, come from other states or countries, adults returning to school after long stretches away from academia, and other cases that will require colleges to continue to address the demand for developmental education. We hope this study will include not only course content and delivery but cost, impact on financial aid, credits earned, and effect on long-term student outcomes.

H.B. No. 6321: An Act Concerning A College Transition Pilot Program. CAHS also supports efforts to improve students' basic skills in English and math in other ways than through developmental education classes at the college level. We need to rethink the current policy of students using up their Pell grant funds on non-credit developmental education courses. The most difficult developmental education problem that faculty and administrators face is teaching basic skills to students who never acquired them in primary or secondary school. Educators struggle to adapt curricula to a growing number of enrollees with an elementary ability in English and math. To get to the root of this problem, administrators and policymakers must ask themselves a basic question: At what level of education should remedial skills in English and math be taught? Should a student be allowed to graduate from high school without them? If a student slips through the academic cracks and ends up graduating from high school underprepared, is college the most appropriate place for such instruction?

CAHS supports **HB 6321** which would establish a pilot program of adult basic education located at a community college to determine whether or not student outcomes are improved if developmental education is delivered before college enrollment. By enrolling a student in adult education, the student would not be depleting their Pell grant funding. Co-location at a community college would provide students with incentives to succeed and encouragement to continue their course of study after adult basic education classes are completed. Co-location could also lend itself to replication of Washington State's I-BEST program, which combined career course content with adult basic education instruction. Washington State has found such programming greatly improves students' long-term outcomes, particularly retention and graduation. We encourage the Committee to also consider the I-BEST model as part of the pilot delivery system.

Both of these bills are important in providing support to adult working students who desire to improve their career opportunities and financial well-being. Remedial education is needed for such a large segment of adult workers that it is important for the state to assist higher education in its delivery so that Connecticut's labor force works to the best of its ability.

CAHS will be releasing our report on remedial education, entitled: *Developmental Education at Connecticut Community Colleges: A Key to Economic Recovery*, at a public forum here at the Legislative Office Building on Friday, March 11th from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in Room 2D. Rep. Roberta Willis and Senator Beth Bye have been invited to participate in the forum. We invite members of the Committee to attend.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.